



**Agency Priority Goal | Action Plan | FY 2022 – FY 2023**

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# Increase conservation of America's coastal land and waters

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## **Goal Leaders:**

Dr. Richard Spinrad, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere & NOAA Administrator

Nicole LeBoeuf, Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management

# Goal Team

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## **APG Leadership**

- Dr. Richard Spinrad, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere & NOAA Administrator
- Nicole LeBoeuf, NOAA Assistant Administrator, National Ocean Service

## **National Marine Sanctuaries**

### **Senior Lead:**

- John Armor, Director Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

## **National Estuarine Research Reserves**

### **Senior Lead:**

- Jeff Payne, Director Office for Coastal Management

## **Coordination**

- NOAA Performance Risk and Social Science Office
- NOS Formulation and Planning Division

# Goal Overview

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## Goal statement

- By September 30, 2023, in support of the America the Beautiful initiative, NOAA will advance formal designation or expansion processes to conserve at least 590,000 square miles of additional coastal and marine habitats as National Marine Sanctuaries or National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs) to help ensure that nationally significant resources continue to provide economic, social, and environmental benefits for future generations.

## Problem to Be Solved

- Protection and conservation of coastal and marine habitats are essential to the health, well-being, and prosperity of every family and every community in America.
- The destruction and loss of sensitive coastal and marine habitat decreases shoreline protection and risks the loss of natural maritime wonders.
- Underserved communities and indigenous populations must be uniquely considered in conserving vulnerable coastal habitat and the impacts on local economies

## What Success Looks Like

- Increased number of locally-generated, quality nominations considered for designation as a marine sanctuary.
- The addition of one new NERR in Connecticut, continued progress toward designation of additional reserves in Wisconsin and Louisiana, and responses to interest from Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Advance the Biden Administration's America the Beautiful initiative's goal to conserve 30% of lands and waters by 2030, by making substantial progress towards designating National Marine Sanctuaries. The America the Beautiful initiative supports voluntary efforts to conserve, connect, and restore lands and waters that support and sustain the Nation.

The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/>

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of 30 coastal sites designated to protect and study estuarine systems and covers nearly 1.4 million square miles of estuaries. Estuaries and their surrounding wetlands are bodies of water usually found where rivers meet the sea. <https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/>

# Goal Strategies

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## Strategy 1: Support the Sanctuary Designation Process

Sanctuaries protect America's most iconic natural and cultural marine resources. Within this APG, NOAA will increase conservation at:

- **Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument**
- **Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary**
- **Proposed Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary**
- **Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary**





NOAA identifies areas to consider for national marine sanctuary designation through the community-based sanctuary nomination process. Nominations that successfully complete the process are added to an inventory of areas NOAA could consider for designation. Sanctuary Designation is a public process that, by law, is highly public and participatory, and often takes several years to complete. Many external factors impact the ultimate success of a nomination, including continued community and congressional support, as well as results of public comment.

### Sanctuary Nomination Process Steps:

- 1 Community Builds a Nomination
- 2 Community Submits Nomination to NOAA
- 3 NOAA's Initial Review
- 4 Taking a Closer Look
- 5 Nomination is Accepted
- 6 Nominated Area Added to Inventory

<https://nominate.noaa.gov/>

### Sanctuary Designation Process Steps:

-  1 Scoping
-  2 Sanctuary Proposal
-  3 Public Review
-  4 Sanctuary Designation

<https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/designations.html>

# Goal Strategies

## Strategy 1: Support the Sanctuary Designation Process

### Sanctuaries Site Descriptions

- **Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument**, a World Heritage listed U.S. National Monument encompassing 583,000 square miles of ocean waters, including ten islands and atolls of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.
- **Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary**, the first tribal-nominated national marine sanctuary designation in the U.S. It would preserve over 100 miles of central California coastline and waters, including Chumash sacred sites to safeguard cultural heritage.
- **Proposed Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary**, located in New York, it would protect maritime heritage resources, including historic shipwrecks, in Lake Ontario and the Thousand Islands region of the St. Lawrence River.
- **Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary**, North America's only coral barrier reef, has extensive seagrass beds, mangrove-fringed islands, more than 6,000 species of marine life, and historic shipwrecks.



# Goal Strategies

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## **Strategy 2: Support the National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs) Designation Process**

NOAA will complete a system of reserves representing the diverse biogeographic and typological character of the United States and estuarine-like systems of the Great Lakes.

- **Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve**
- **Proposed Lake Michigan reserve**
- **Other possible reserve designation**

The NERRS designation process is state-driven, requiring that the governor of an interested state or territory submit a letter of interest to NOAA. If approved, the state leads the site selection, stakeholder engagement/public comment, and management plan development processes, in coordination with NOAA, and assists in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement.

Throughout designation, NOAA maintains communication with state partners and with Congressional delegations and provides technical assistance to external partners with the nomination and designation processes.

### **National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Steps:**

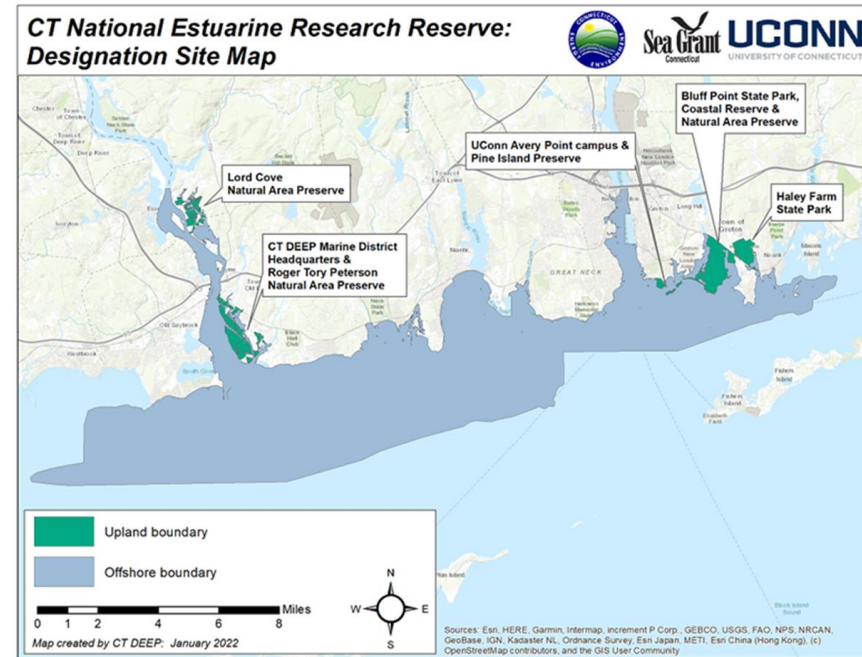
- 1 Letter of Interest
- 2 Site Selection and Nomination
- 3 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Draft Management Plan
- 4 Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Final Management Plan
- 5 Designation Findings and Certificate; Record of Decision
- 6 Designation Ceremony

# Goal Strategies

## Strategy 2: Support the National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs) Designation Process

### NERRs Site Descriptions

- The **Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve** protects 52,160 acres of the Long Island Sound, portions of the lower Thames River, and portions of the lower Connecticut River. It contains important fish species such as Atlantic salmon and the endangered shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon. The Reserve includes areas recognized as “wetlands of international importance” by the Ramsar Convention.
- While a site for the **proposed Lake Michigan** reserve has not yet been selected, the designation would be on the world's largest freshwater estuary, Green Bay. The designation would add a third research reserve to the Great Lakes region and be the first to represent Lake Michigan estuarine habitats. If designated, the Lake Michigan reserve would provide opportunities to conduct research on coastal management challenges, such as harmful algal blooms, lake level variability, and chemicals of emerging concern.
- Specific sites for **other possible reserve designation** have not yet been identified through the state-led site selection process.



# Goal Targets

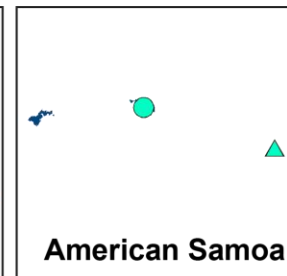
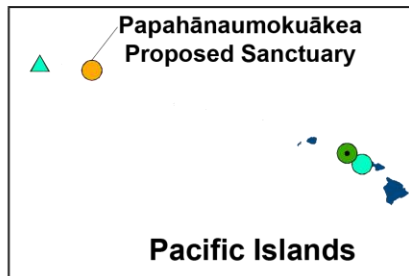
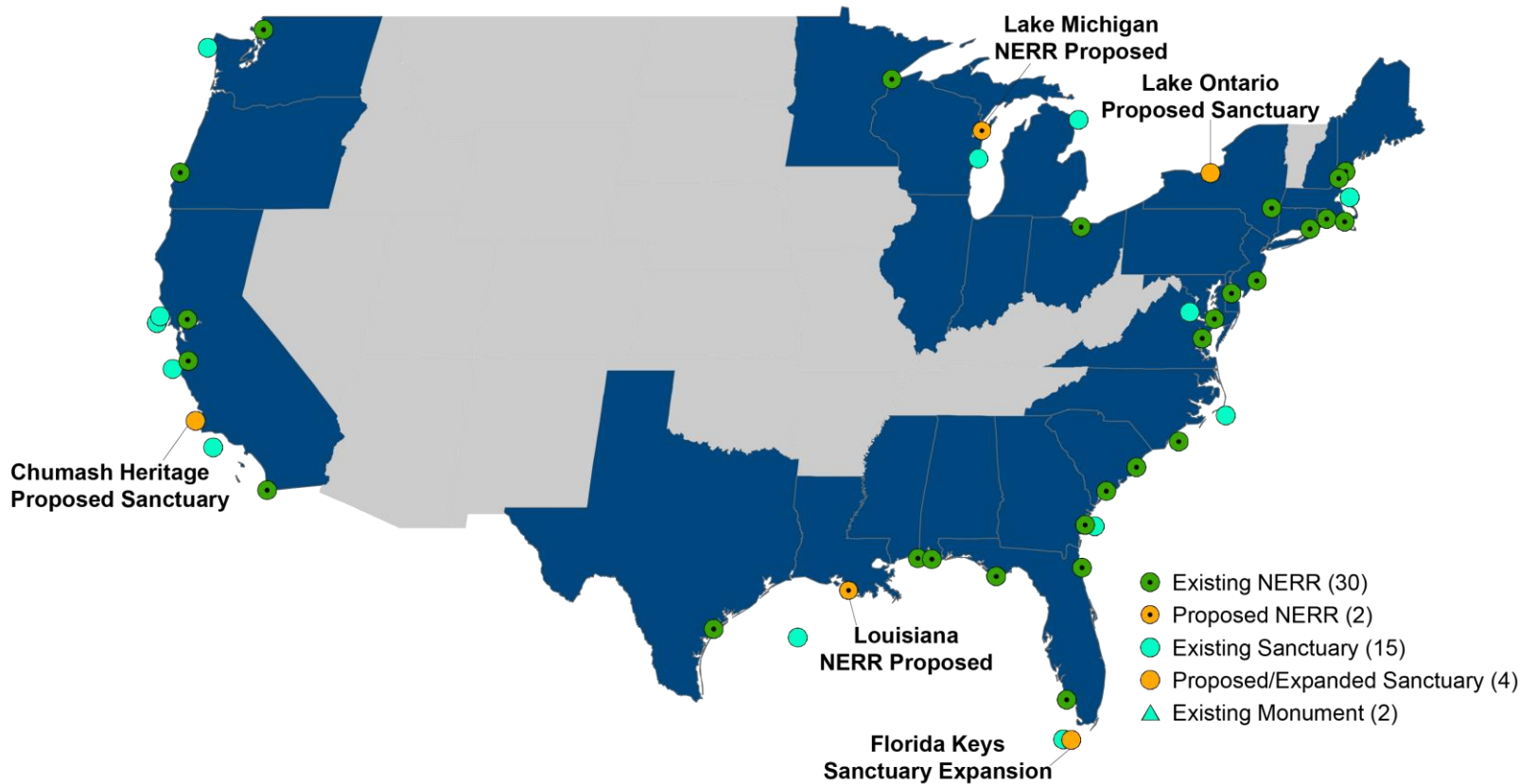
Achievement statement		Key indicators	Quantify progress			Frequency
By September 30, 2023, in support of the America the Beautiful initiative, NOAA will advance formal designation or expansion processes to conserve at least 590,000 square miles of additional coastal and marine habitats as National Marine Sanctuaries or National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs) to help ensure that nationally significant resources continue to provide economic, social, and environmental benefits for future generations.						
By...	We will...	Name of indicator	Target value	Starting value	Current value Q1 FY 2022	Update cycle
09/30/23	Advance 590,000 square miles of new area through one or more steps of National Marine Sanctuaries or National Estuarine Research Reserves designation or expansion processes.*	Square miles of marine area entered into designation or expansion processes for sanctuaries or NERRs	590,000	0	0	Quarterly
09/30/23	Complete 24 process milestones across current and planned designation & expansion evaluations	Number of sanctuary & NERR designation/expansion process milestones completed	24	0	2	Quarterly
09/30/23	Conduct 10 public outreach and feedback sessions with local communities and underserved populations to provide information and support on the nomination process	Number of public comment opportunities in the nomination process.	10	0	1	Quarterly

\* The 590,000 square miles are proposed designations and expansions. The exact square miles are determined through a public process.



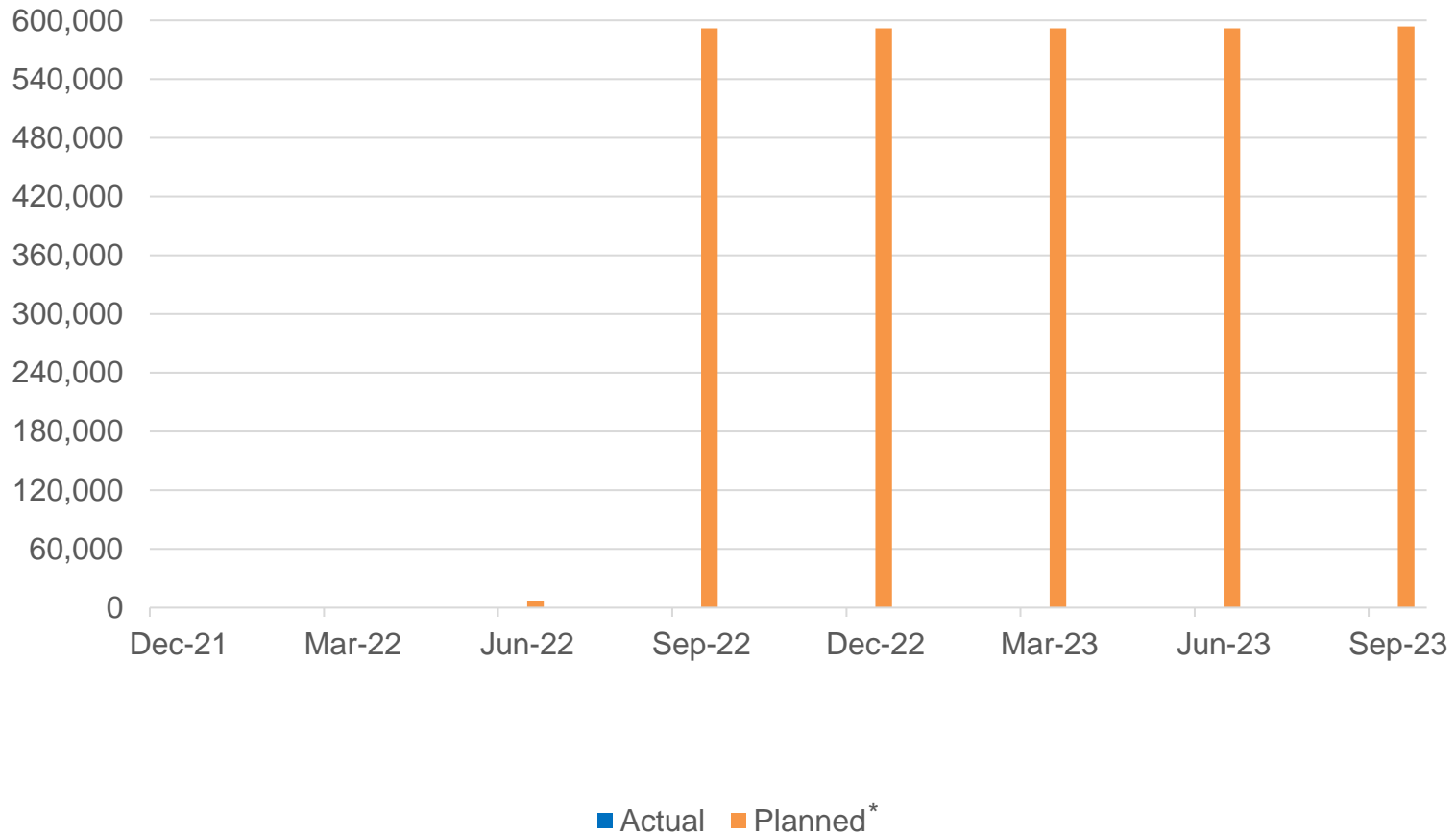
# NOAA Sanctuaries, Monuments, and NERRs

## NOAA Sanctuaries, Monuments, and National Estuarine Research Reserves



# Key indicators

## Square miles of marine area entered into designation or expansion processes for sanctuaries or NERRs

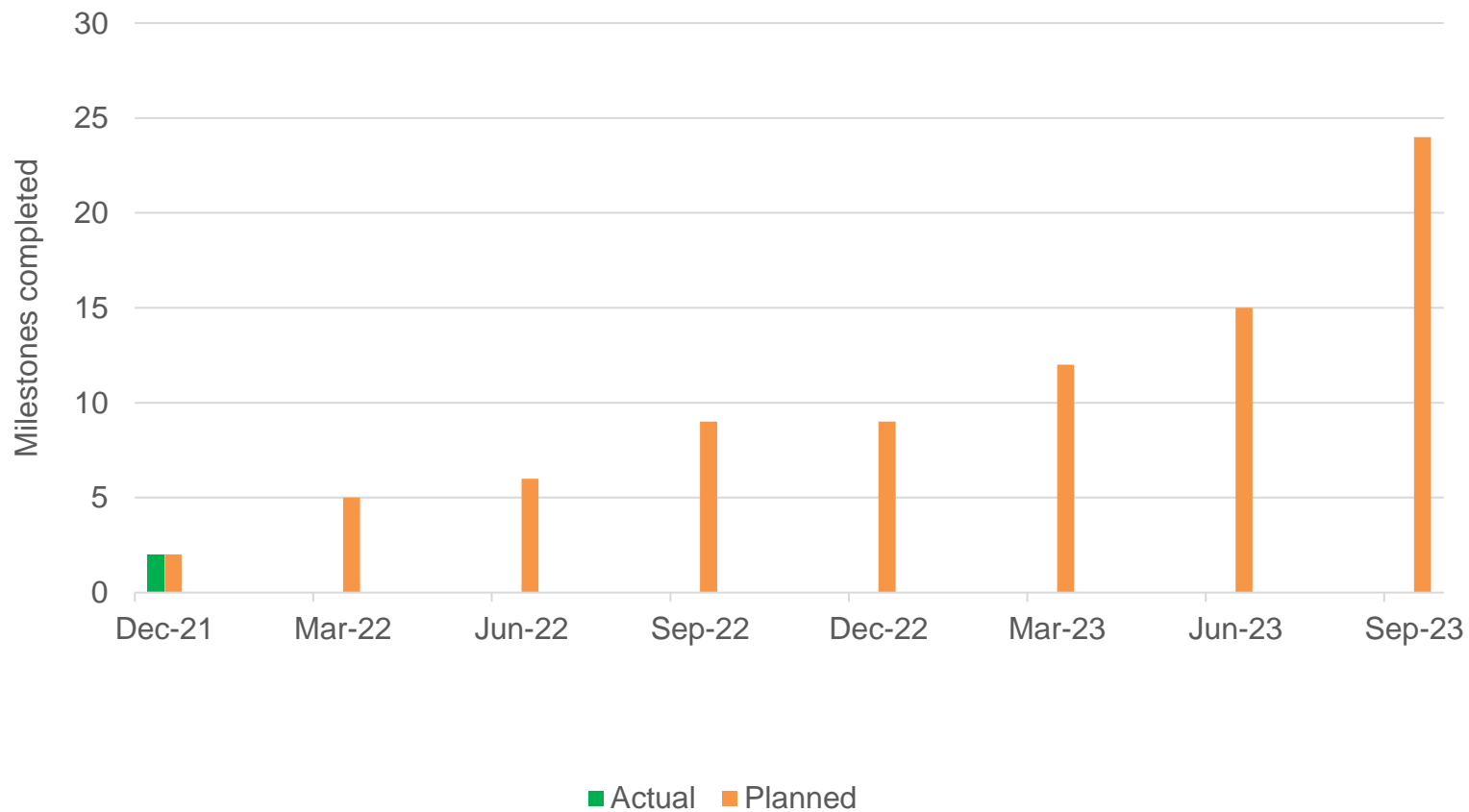


\* Planned values are based on preliminary estimates of square mileage for proposed Sanctuary designations. These estimates are not used to determine or influence the actual area designated; that determination is done solely through the official designation processes. Note that preliminary estimates for NERRs cannot be made until site selection is complete.

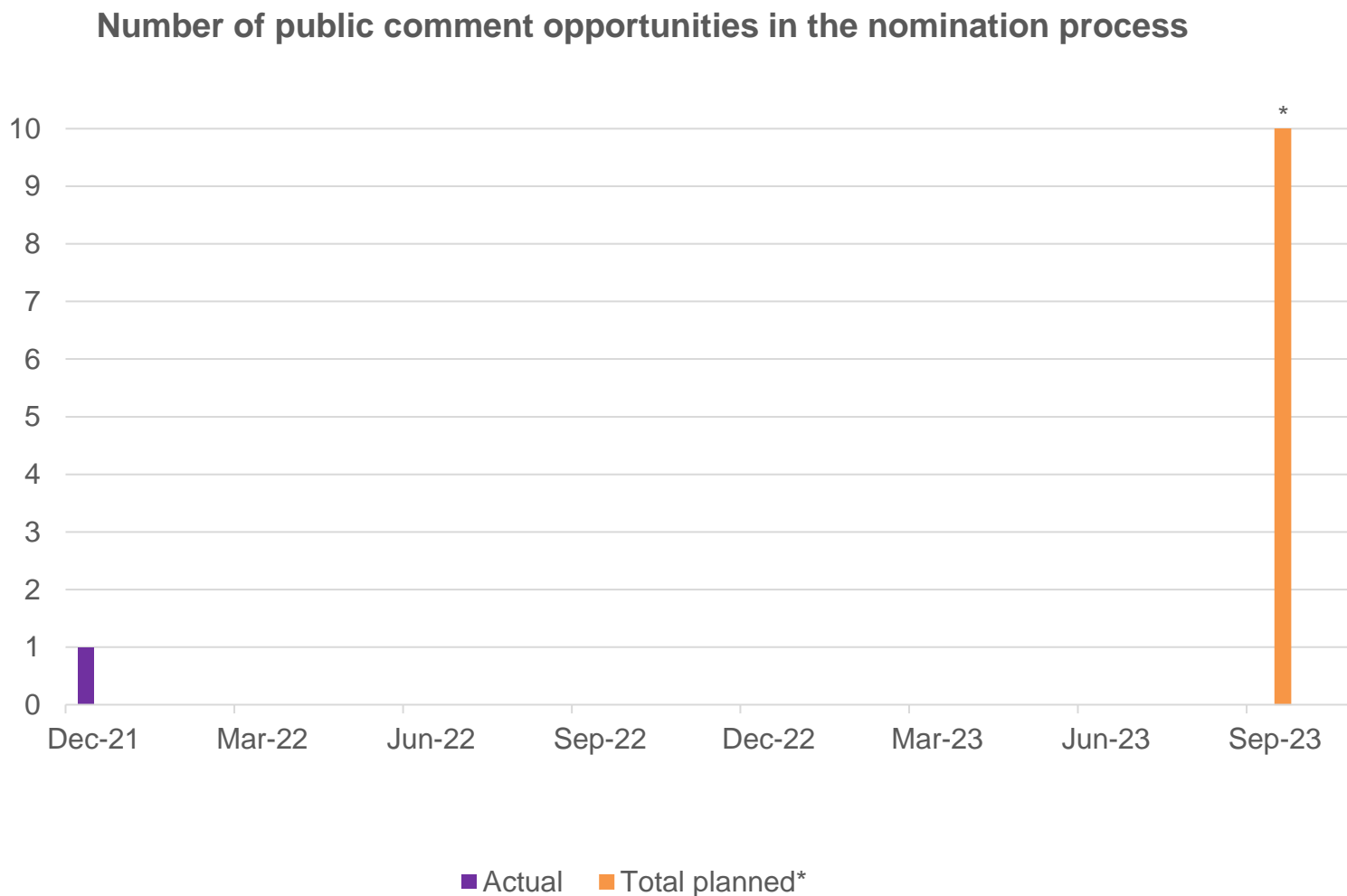
# Key indicators

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## Sanctuary and NERR designation/expansion process milestones completed



# Key indicators



\* Planned values indicate the total number planned across the entire 2-year period. The public outreach and feedback sessions are a state-led process and NOAA does not control when these meetings occur.

# Key milestones: Sanctuaries

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 1 Scoping – Issue Notice of Intent</b>			
Papahānaumokuākea NM: Issue Notice of Intent	Q1, FY22	Complete	
Chumash Heritage NM: Issue Notice of Intent	Q1, FY22	Complete	
Additional nominated area (TBD): Issue Notice of Intent	Q4, FY22		

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 2 Sanctuary Proposal – Issue Draft Rule, EIS, and/or Plan</b>			
Lake Ontario NMS: Issue Draft Proposed Rule	Q4, FY22		DOC/OMB review required.
Florida Keys NMS expansion: Issue Draft Proposed Rule	Q4, FY22		DOC/OMB review required.
Chumash Heritage NMS: Issue Draft EIS & Mgmt. Plan	Q2, FY23		Completion subject to public input.
Chumash Heritage NMS: Issue Draft Proposed Rule	Q2, FY23		DOC/OMB review required. Completion subject to public input.
Papahānaumokuākea NMS: Issue Draft EIS & Mgmt. Plan	Q4, FY23		Completion subject to public input.
Papahānaumokuākea NMS: Issue Draft Proposed Rule	Q4, FY23		DOC/OMB review required. Completion subject to public input.
Additional nominated area (TBD): Issue Draft EIS & Mgmt. Plan	Q4, FY23		Completion subject to public input.
Additional nominated area (TBD): Issue Draft Proposed Rule	Q4, FY23		DOC/OMB review required. Completion subject to public input.

# Key milestones: Sanctuaries

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 4 Sanctuary Designation – Issue Final Rule, EIS, and Plan</b>			
Florida Keys NMS expansion: Issue Final Environmental Compliance Documentation & Mgmt. Plan	Q3, FY23		Completion subject to public input.
Florida Keys NMS expansion: Issue Final Rule	Q3, FY23		DOC/OMB review required. Completion subject to public input.
Lake Ontario NMS: Issue Final EIS	Q4, FY23		Completion subject to public input.
Lake Ontario NMS: Issue Final Management Plan	Q4, FY23		Completion subject to public input.
Lake Ontario NMS: Issue Final Rule	Q4, FY23		DOC/OMB review required. Completion subject to public input.
Lake Ontario NMS: Designate Sanctuary	Q4, FY23		Completion subject to public input.

NOTE: There are no milestones for Step 3 of the designation process, 'Public Review'. During this step, the public reviews everything that was published in the Sanctuary Proposal step. The results of that review are addressed in the final published documents during step 4

# Key milestones: NERR

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 1: Letter of Interest</b>			
US Virgin Islands: NOAA responds to the US Virgin Islands regarding their letter of interest for a new reserve.	Q2, FY22		
Florida NERR: NOAA responds to the state of Florida regarding their letter of interest for a new reserve.	Q2, FY22		

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 2: Site Selection and Nomination</b>			
Lake Michigan: NOAA participates in a series of public meetings to inform site selection for a new NERR in the state of Wisconsin.	Q2, FY23		
Louisiana: NOAA participates in a series of public meetings to inform site selection for a new NERR in the state of Louisiana.	Q3, FY23		

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 3: Draft EIS and Draft Management Plan</b>			
Lake Michigan: The state of Wisconsin, in partnership with NOAA, initiates development of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan.	Q4, FY23		

# Key milestones: NERR

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 4: Final EIS and Final Management Plan</b>			
[no planned milestones for this step]			

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 5: Designation Findings &amp; Certificate; Record of Decision</b>			
Connecticut NERR: NOAA issues a Record of Decision to finalize the designation.	Q2, FY22		

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
<b>Designation Step 6: Designation Ceremony</b>			
Connecticut NERR: NOAA and the state of Connecticut hold a formal designation ceremony.	Q3, FY22		

Note: Milestones are important components of designation steps, but do not always align with a beginning or end of a given step.



# Narrative – FY 2022 Q1

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- NOAA is **On track** to accomplish the main target.

## **Sanctuaries**

- In Q1 FY2022, NOAA issued the notice of intent to designate two sanctuaries: Chumash Heritage NMS and Papahānaumokuākea NMS.
- The notice of intent kicks off the scoping phase for a new sanctuary. Once public comment closes, NOAA will have to review comments and decide on next steps – which is also part of the scoping phase.

## **National Estuarine Research Reserves**

- In Q1, NOAA and the state of Connecticut worked to finalize the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan for the Connecticut NERR. The reserve designation was announced in January 2022.
- The designation ceremony will be held at UCONN Avery Point on Saturday, May 21, 2022, from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m, followed by small group campus tours and boat trips, as desired..

# Data accuracy & reliability

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## **Sanctuaries Data**

- Sanctuary sizes are projected in square miles for the purposes of this APG. Throughout the designation process, the size of a given sanctuary can change in response to public comments.
- As sanctuary designation is a public process, all schedule and milestones are variable and dependent on results of initial assessment/scoping and public comments throughout.
- The outcome of a sanctuary designation process is not guaranteed. Before the designation becomes effective, the Governor of the relevant state reviews the final documents. Congress also has the opportunity to review the final documents.
- Sanctuaries boundaries and areas are tracked using a GIS map. Rules and related documents tracked as process milestones are posted in the Federal Register.

## **National Estuarine Research Reserves Data**

- NERR size cannot be estimated until after the state-directed site selection process is complete and a range of alternatives (i.e., proposed reserve boundaries) has been developed for the environmental analysis process. Final acreage is not available until the record of decision is issued and designation is complete. NOAA does not determine the size of a reserve, but rather works with state partners through a public engagement process to propose a reserve boundary and associated total acreage.
- Reserve area data is generated by the NERR and managed by the NOAA-funded Centralized Data Management Office (CDMO) of the University of South Carolina. Reserves generate boundary information (i.e., shapefiles) which are submitted to the CDMO for review and then made available for reporting purposes and public view and download.

# Additional information

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## **Contributing Programs**

Organizations:

- NOAA, National Office Service

Program Activities:

- Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
- Office for Coastal Management

Regulations:

- Coastal Zone Management Act
- National Marine Sanctuaries Act
- Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Act

Policies:

- Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad

## **Stakeholder / Congressional Consultations**

Sanctuaries:

- National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
- Affiliated states and tribes

NERRs:

- National Estuarine Research Reserve Association
- State of Connecticut
- University of Connecticut
- State of Florida
- Louisiana State University (Louisiana Sea Grant)
- University of Wisconsin - Green Bay
- Territory of U.S. Virgin Islands